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Statement by Senator Edmund S. Muskie on Latin America for U.S. News and World Report

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The present Administration's official policy makes it appear that the United States has become blind and indifferent to the vast social revolution engulfing Latin America. This attitude disregards present facts and future possibilities. Latin America is not a distant place inhabited by unknown strangers. It is a region of neighbors, with a large periphery of borders that blend into our own. More than ten million of our people share its heredity. It is linked to us by history since before the dawn of our independence, and by a long tradition of friendship and alliance through the most agonizing years of world crises. We are vitally linked by trade and commerce; indeed, if Latin America can succeed in its economic development--and of all the developing regions of the world it can be the first to succeed --we would derive increased strength to our own economy. Yet at the very time that virtually every nation in this region needs our most sensitive understanding, stirred as they are by a powerful and assertive nationalism to discard archaic institutions and to discover new pathways to human needs , the Nixon Administration has retreated to what it calls a "low profile"--a code word for low interest, low imagination, low leadership, and low performance.

We have discarded the Alliance for Progress with no good substitute in sight. The first steps toward the Alliance; the establishment of the Inter-American Development Bank, the Act of Bogota, and the establishment of the Social Progress Trust Fund, were taken during the last years of the Eisenhower administration. The Kennedy and Johnson administrations gave continuity to those beginnings and developed the U.S. Aid Program and the other institutions that constituted the Alliance. Yet, with the opportunity to give further continuity to a policy designed to meet Latin America's overriding problems of economic and social development, the Nixon administration has unaccountably substituted a rhetorical barrage suggesting "action for progress," action on trade preferences, proposals for "upgrading" the head of the State Department's Latin American Bureau to the level of Undersecretary, the transfer of technology, and the pursuit of a "special relationship"--all of which have remained, however, pure rhetoric--the promises, explicitly made, have remained explicitly unfulfilled. They are hidden somewhere under the low profile.

We need a new policy for Latin America, reconstructed from the shambles the Nixon Administration has made of the Alliance. Simply to sell arms to the region, to train their police to suppress dissent, to withhold support for loans in the multilateral institutions to impose pressure against nationalization of resources (and[?]

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annoyances - these attributes of the "low profile" policy scarcely
befit the most powerful nation of the Western Hemisphere in its
dealings with its closest neighbors.

We should be earnestly engaged in developing with the Latin American nations a new set of institutions to facilitate their efforts ^{at} regional integration, a basic program initiated under the Alliance but which is now virtually stagnant. We should be together giving impulse to the Organization of American States whose structure was modernized under the Alliance, but which is now inert. The Inter-American Development Bank needs a major overhaul of its programs to meet the urgent needs of the region. We need imaginative new institutions that can help to conciliate national interests with those of private investment and convert these conflicts into cooperative ventures. We need to revise our trade relations with the region with which we have a favorable trade balance, as we revise them with the rest of the world, but taking account of the region's special problems. We need a courageous exercise of executive leadership in order that a skeptical Congress will be willing to support a new and creative direction of our Latin American policy.

I regret our recent neglect of Latin America; not only because it is a region of friends and allies, but because of

larger reasons of our own national interest. The era of patronizing and unilateral invocation of the Monroe doctrine is dead, as Latin America seeks a new relationship ^{with} ~~to~~ the world. A wise, patient and friendly policy could induce Latin America, seeking to implement its new found independence, to rejoin our country in making this Hemisphere a region of freedom and social justice. Continued neglect, on the other hand, will lead to our own isolation--to the unhappy and dangerous paradox of a powerful United States without friends or allies in its own geographic region of the world.